

DD/A REGISTRY

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DDA 79-3522

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Director of Training, 1026 C of C

Don:

Both Danny and I read the attached paper which is not only interesting but probably right on target for most people.

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Danny suggests that the author write chapter 2 after completing his stint at

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NOTES FROM A CAREER TRAINEE



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Entering on duty at CIA is an experience which requires patience, a sense of humor, and an appreciation for the finer intricacies of bureaucratic existence. If these elements are assembled properly within the mind of a new recruit so that a sort of Platonic harmony of the psyche is achieved, then there is good reason to believe that the initial trauma of 'coming aboard' will be negotiated successfully. If not, difficulties may be encountered. Here, then, are some observations, impressions, and survival suggestions from a current Career Trainee.

First, there is the matter of expectations, both

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positive and negative. You may arrive, for example, with the conviction that you are about to embark upon a fascinating career with an elite corps of exceptional people. You may in fact actually be about to embark upon a fascinating career with an elite corps of exceptional people, but it is also an indisputable fact that you are going to work for an institution of the federal government, which means that a certain amount of drudgery is inevitable, particularly in the early going. You will be required to fill out more forms in the first week of your employment than you have probably filled out in your entire previous existence, and you and your colleagues will be herded from one office to another like a squadron of bereft sheep. Little deference will be shown to you by those administering your arrival, and you may feel that you are not receiving the kind of respect and personal attention you feel you deserve. Nevertheless you must endure it all with grace, wit, and a slightly ironic smile worn either on your face or, more importantly, within your mind.

Fortunately there is good news on the subject of expectations as well, particularly if you arrive with a certain amount of trepidation over what you have gotten yourself into. From the moment you first walk into the headquarters building, reassurances of institutional sanity abound. The building

itself, settled comfortably amidst acres of trees, exudes a kind of calm self assurance that is distinctly different from the atmosphere of frenetic intensity that might be expected. Inside, the environment is almost academic, with overt regimentation at a minimum. First names are the rule rather than the exception, even among people of vastly different grades, which serves to create a collegial atmosphere that is distinctly unmilitary. Crew cuts and relatively long hair seem to coexist peacefully, as do doubleknits and worsted wool. Individualism, visible in small ways everywhere, leads you to realize that you may have found something quite unique: a government agency that does not rely upon a horde of drones to do its business.

Coming aboard as a Career Trainee, you quickly find yourself in the midst of a clearly identifiable peer group. During the first several days an intense probing takes place as individuals within the class grope for some kind of commonality, both in terms of past experience and future expectations. Particularly if you are among those arriving from private business or the academic world,

(for whom the initial transition is most severe) you'll sense a kind of shared relief as it becomes apparent that other reasonable people besides yourself have wrestled with the ironies and conundrums that abound in what is certainly a peculiar line of work, and have reached the conclusion that espionage and integrity are not altogether incompatible. Again you are reassured and your worst fears--that you might find yourself surrounded by a band of hardcore cowboys--are able to be put comfortably aside.

The three week orientation course, though not without its moments of illumination, is destined to test your tolerance for tedium by virtue of its very objective, which is to provide a broad overview of CIA from the office level on up. As a student, the trick would seem to be to keep your mind selectively open through it all so that you can identify and assimilate the important elements of what is being said and tune out the rest. If you do this, and if you have a natural facility for acronyms and wiring diagrams, then you'll come out of the course with a good working understanding of the organization you're working for. Beyond that, the main thing is simply surviving.

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Throughout the orientation period a somewhat mystical apparition hangs on the horizon, the subject of speculation that begins as idle chatter and grows to something a great deal more intense as time goes on. The

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the morning all the time typing reports. The result is that no one really knows quite what to expect, but as the time to leave draws closer there seems to be a unanimous impatience to get on with it.

Not too surprisingly, things do not always run smoothly. Mixups cover the entire spectrum from mildly ironic, as when a speaker representing the gadget specialists

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from the Office of Technical Services can't get a slide projector to work and then breaks a microphone, to the more substantive, as when the class finds that the [] they have been trying to plausibly build upon for the past several months (not an easy task in most cases) is suddenly to be scrapped in favor of immediate [] At this juncture, a sense of humor--mildly warped--is essential.

During the orientation course there are optional lunch hour films which cover a variety of topics ranging from Jack Anderson's address to the Agency to a documentary on 'Carlos' the notorious terrorist. Of these, there are two films--one dealing with the PLO from a Palestinian point of view and one examining cultural misunderstandings between America and China--which serve again as reassurance to the wary newcomer that CIA is more interested in developing in its officers an appreciation for the complexities surrounding international issues than in fostering an extension of the cold war mentality of the past. While the films themselves are less than perfect, the fact that they are shown at all implies an institutional flexibility that is encouraging.

By far the most fascinating and universal phenomenon shared by virtually all DO bound CT's is the problem of deciding which area division with which you want to cast your lot. At the outset it seems that everyone prefers Europe, but before long rumors about huge stations and slow promotions for junior officers send people, along with their dreams of an exciting career, scattering to the corners of the globe. From this point on a continuous upheaval takes place, and in a typical week you end up wanting to spend your life in Asia on Monday, Africa on Tuesday, and the Middle East on Wednesday. By Friday you're back to thinking Europe might be best after all. Eventually you realize that nothing is certain except, perhaps, that there are as many different ways of going about a career as there are people to do it. Time, you have to believe, is on your side and the mystical experience at the will provide the necessary epiphanies to help you sort things out properly. In the meantime all you can do is sit tight, keep your mouth shut and your eyes and ears open, and wait. It's not always easy.